

A Few Precious Days
with Swami Venkatesananda



23



❧❧❧❧❧❧
A Few Precious Days
with Swami Venkatesananda

❧❧❧❧❧❧
as recalled by Jyoti



OM!

JAYA GANESHA JAYA GANESHA JAYA GANESHA PAHIMAM
SRI GANESHA SRI GANESHA SRI GANESHA RAKSAMAM

JAYA SARASVATI JAYA SARASVATI JAYA SARASVATI PAHIMAM
SRI SARASVATI SRI SARASVATI SRI SARASVATI RAKSAMAM

SARAVANABHAVA SARAVANABHAVA SARAVANABHAVA PAHIMAM
SUBRAHMANYA SUBRAHMANYA SUBRAHMANYA RAKSAMAM

DATTATREYA DATTATREYA DATTATREYA PAHIMAM
DATTAGURU DATTAGURU DATTAGURU RAKSAMAM

SIVANANDA SIVANANDA SIVANANDA PAHIMAM
SIVANANDA SIVANANDA SIVANANDA RAKSAMAM

VENKATESA VENKATESA VENKATESA PAHIMAM
VENKATESA VENKATESA VENKATESA RAKSAMAM

OM JESUS OM JESUS OM JESUS OM
OM BUDDHA OM BUDDHA OM BUDDHA OM

OM TAT SAT OM TAT SAT OM TAT SAT OM
OM SANTI OM SANTI OM SANTI OM

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE
HARE KRSNA HARE KRSNA KRSNA KRSNA HARE HARE

GURUR BRAHMA GURUR VISNUH GURUR DEVO MAHESVARAH
GURUH SAKSAT PARA BRAHMA TASMAI SRI GURUVE NAMAH
DHYANAMULAM GUROR MURTIH PUJAMULAM GUROR PADAM
MANTRAMULAM GUROR VAKYAM MOKSAMULAM GUROR KRPA

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरु साक्षात् परब्रह्मा तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

In Heartfelt Gratitude to
HIS HOLINESS SWAMI VENKATESANANDA
Born 29th December 1921
Mahasamadhi 2nd December 1982

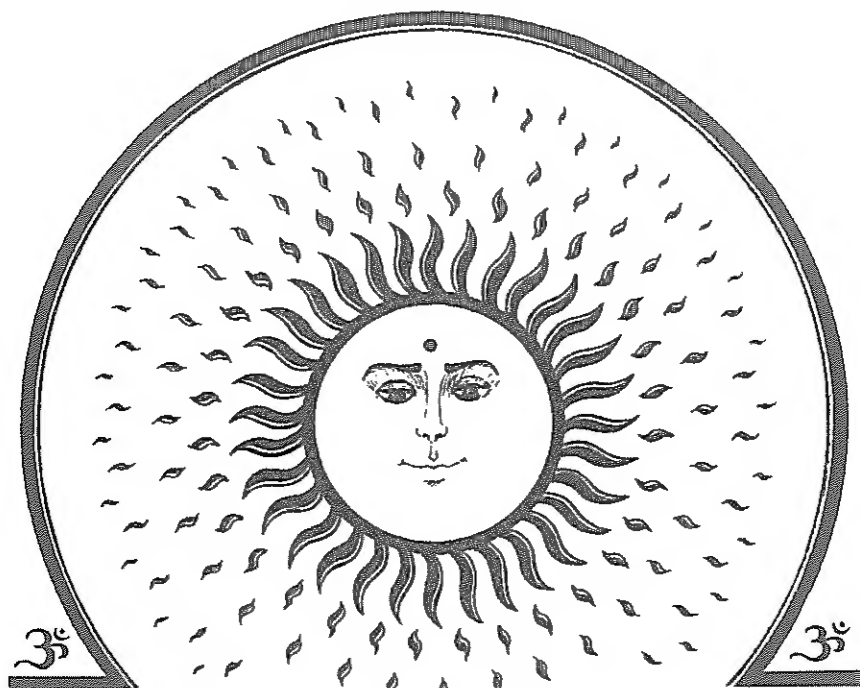


For a few precious days each year from 1978 to 1982 His Holiness Swami Venkatesananda graced our lives with his presence in Harbord.

To all who attended his talks and satsangas Swamiji gave, each according to what they sought.

To those who came, perhaps for the first time, wanting an introduction to the philosophy of yoga, his words were thrilling and encouraging. Those who came as devotees of other Masters went away secure in the knowledge that their own devotion had been uplifted and strengthened, and for those of us who found the Guru in Swamiji, it was a longed for opportunity to serve and to receive in abundance spiritual food, to be relished in his presence and digested over the following months and years.

We sat at his feet and he shared his divine wisdom. He generated the spirit of discipleship and to all he radiated unhesitating love and understanding. Every visit became the high point of our year, awaited for months, remembered always.



A wonderful day!

The occasion of Swamiji's
first visit to Harbord
29th April 1978



How can a simple thing be made complex? Did you ever think of that? You are here and we are here too, and perhaps the purpose of our getting together here - if there is a purpose at all - might be served beautifully if we just look at each other, smile and go away. Yet there is first a suggestion (I wanted to say 'illusion' but perhaps you won't agree) that there is a purpose, and then I have to decide how best this purpose could be achieved. Because I think quite a number of possibilities exist. An extremely simple thing is getting more and more complicated ... quite a number of possibilities exist; there is a purpose and, to serve that purpose, quite a number of possibilities exist and someone has to make a decision. 'Decision' is very much like 'incision'. I am one whole being and I am put under some surgeon's table and an incision is made - one becomes two, many, several ... something comes out, something remains - all sorts of things. A decision has to be made, so there is this purpose, choice, decision. What we have never bothered to look at is, "Is there a purpose at all?" Is there? - A purpose at all? It sounds a bit primitive; to enquire into this fundamental thing, is there a purpose in life at all? Have we gathered together for a purpose? Are we all together for a purpose? If so, who determines this? Who determines the purpose? If all of us - just this 50, 60 people are honest, you discover there is not just one purpose. If there are 50 people there are at least - huh, how many? - 75 purposes because some of us have got two or three! Each one has a different purpose; each one has a different attitude; each one has a completely different outlook. I am here - I have a purpose in mind; she has a purpose in her mind, so has he and so have you - and some of you have got ... multi-purpose!

Once we have assumed that there is a purpose (because the complicated mind refuses to see, or ask itself, "Is there a purpose to it?") we assume that there is a purpose for which we have been delivered into this world. If you will forgive my being light-hearted, the only purpose is that I was a burden to my mother. She wanted to get rid of this thing! It could have been as simple as that - and once the delivery has taken place her problem is solved and ... my problem need not arise. I am here.

For everything the mind asks, demands a reason - and supplies the reason. Isn't it a joke? It is the mind that asks for the reason and it is the mind that supplies the reason. Neither of these has any validity in life at all. You can see that quite clearly. Very simple! I shave my head every morning. The mind wants to know why. "Why do you shave yourself?" "Because I want to appear nice - not so old as I really am". But then, if that is so, then the hair comes up again. It seems to be hopeless, thankless, useless job! I am sure all of us eat at least three times a day. "Why do you eat?" "Because I want to appease my hunger". But it is not appeased. A couple of hours later it starts again. Or, "Why do you eat?" "I want to live". But you don't live. Inevitably we are proceeding towards the grave. What is this absurdity we are trapped in. We assume all sorts of purposes. "Why do you practice yoga?" "In order to be ever-youthful, ever-young". Nonsense! Believe me, I have seen many yogis - great ones, super-great ones, less-great ones and not-so great ones and I might tell you that most of them whom I knew, whom I was acquainted with about 30 years' ago are all dead. Why are you practising yoga? In order to be forever young and forever healthy and all that sort of thing ... it's not possible! When you come to a yoga class, the mind asks you, "Why am I practising yoga?" and the mind supplies the answer. It's a ridiculous thing. The mind asks the question and the mind itself provides the answer - which is an absurd thing. A game!

Yesterday a girl asked me, "If one practises yoga can one keep on being young for a long, long time?" Perhaps! I told her, "Don't try this - you are very beautiful and if you continue to be so young and beautiful and charming for a long, long time you are going to cause a lot of problems!" One doesn't visualise the total scheme. I want just one part of it. Right? Let's see ... (Swamiji claps his hands together) ... the swami's in very good health, touch wood (tapping his head) and someone says, "Oh my God, you look ever young" - said just as a compliment, not based on fact ... anyhow, and if by some miracle of yoga the swami remains in perfect health for the next 10, 20, 30 years and at the age of 86 he comes here and talks to you in exactly the same spirit and in the same tone and, before finishing the talk he ... (Swamiji feigns death) wouldn't you ask, "My God, he was so healthy, why did he have to die?". "He was so healthy and so young, so vibrant and why did he have to die?". So what do you want me to do? Live for ever? I don't know if you have ever considered

this: supposing all of us were granted immortality, physical immortality - for ever and ever and ever. You know what a rotten world we would create? All the idiots will continue to be immortal!

Is there a purpose to all this? Is there a purpose at all to it? Because the question of how best the purpose can be served, which means choice, and then the decision, comes later. First, is there a purpose at all to life? Have we been created for a certain purpose? Created I don't even know what that word means. Created does not mean, you know, composed, put together. Created means created - out of nothing. You and I were not created out of nothing so that word is also absurd. Are we here for a purpose?

Is there a purpose to life itself? You are building beautiful houses hoping that a roof over your head would provide security. Does it? Have you met some of these - maybe some of you are - millionaires? Have you met some of those millionaires who have big houses, enormous bungalows? In those days when I was young that itself was supposed to be the ultimate in security. Yes? You have a big house and so you are secure, and then they discovered that that was not security, it was insecurity - the larger the house the greater the area in which the robbers could operate! They could hide themselves. Here they can't hide, there they could hide. And so they had to install burglar alarms. Where is security? All right, you are safe - but then they kidnap you on the roads. If you are a tourist, oh you enjoy all those old-time castles. They are tourist attractions now, no security, no insecurity, nothing at all. And there is not even a security guard there to take two shillings. Can you stand before one of those enormous structures and visualise the builder of those years - what glorious thoughts passed through his mind. "Here I am. I am the ruler of this place and by building this I am not only securing my security but I am securing the happiness and the prosperity and the peace of so many people around me." Absurd! We even go so far as to secure a dead body in a box and keep it safe so that somebody might ... Aaach! You know the other latest craze of freezing, or deep-freezing people? I was intrigued ... If I have some strange illness for which some of you decide to deep-freeze me and so perhaps they stick a tag or something 'open this casket in 200 years' time'. Someone opens the casket and blows - I don't know what they do - and then I come round (Swamiji stares blankly around him) - I don't know who is round me,

what language they would be speaking, the whole civilisation may be totally different. You see the total, ridiculous absurdity of the life that we visualise for ourselves. Because somehow we think - or the mind thinks - that there is a purpose, and I am hunting for that purpose.

The mind itself suggests a purpose. "My purpose is to serve all." What do you mean, "serve all"? Soup? What do I serve? How do I serve? What is service? I know of quite a number of social workers, swamis, holy men who serve humanity by telling them, "You shouldn't do that, you shouldn't do this, you know". Serving, elevating them, uplifting them. You haven't asked me whether I want to be uplifted or down-trodden! If you and I are standing on the fifth floor and you want to uplift me, to take me up, I don't want to go down to the ground floor. Have you ever found out what I want, what I need? What is uplifting? Creating a conflict in me, creating a problem within me? And this is begun right from the moment a child is born; toilet training. If you don't mind my saying so, all of us are undergoing this toilet training 'til we die. Someone or other is telling us all the time, "This you should do, you shouldn't do this, you should ...". It is exactly toilet training! And just as the diapers are around the baby, we also have got all sorts of diapers around ourselves - head to foot! And we are never allowed to be ourselves ... and that is called service? Is that what we are here for, to tell one another what we should or should not do? Has my life any purpose at all? Does it need to be manipulated either by myself or others so that I might measure up to some kind of a standard?

When I am measuring up to a standard I am struggling all of the time. This standard is ... you know how these standards are set, don't you? Someone takes what they call the average. Average intelligence! Have you ever met someone with an average intelligence? Average intelligence! I really don't know how they work it out. I can sort of figure out how they work out average income but I have no idea how they work out average intelligence. Average income is: he earns \$200 a week, she earns \$100, I am a beggar. And what is the average income of the three of us? \$100. Somebody is way up and somebody else is somewhere and then this average income doesn't apply to anybody. The average intelligence doesn't apply to anybody. Either you are above average intelligence or you are below

average - nobody has 'average' intelligence! How do you live in this world? Is there a purpose in all this? Must I measure up to a standard? Set by whom? And this fashion seems to be changing continuously. Not only your hairstyle - the thinking fashion also changes. I don't know if you are subject to these 'decadent' cataclysms. Decadent in the sense of 'once in a decade' another cataclysm takes over. Now it is psycho-analysis, and now it is primal scream, and now it is transcendental meditation, and now it is Every few years something gets hold of us and all of us swing. The standard has changed - which means that it was not standard - it was 'runnered'! If it was standard it must be standing. This standard seems to be running and all of us are chasing one another to keep pace with this changing phenomenon. Who sets the standard? How do we discover this? How do we discover what the purpose of life is, and if there is a purpose at all? And therefore, the first question which seems to be of great importance is for each one of us to ask ourselves, or to ask life itself, "What is your purpose?"

I remember a rather distressing incident in South Africa about 15 years' ago. There was a public meeting and somehow it dragged on until about 10.30. Then the chairman said, "We usually ask for questions". A man shot up - 10.30, everybody was tired, all of us wanted to go home. This man shot up, "Swami, what is the purpose of life?" I nearly wanted to tell him, "Look around - all of them are sleeping. That is the purpose of life". Anyhow, I didn't want to be rude, but I ended up being rude. I said, "Sir, to live". What is the purpose of life? To live! Isn't that enough? It wasn't, to him. He shot up again. "What do you mean, 'to live'?" How do I answer that question at 10.30 at night? I told him, "To live is to be alive". Everybody laughed. That was the mistake. The next day he wrote a stinking letter "I thought you were a swami and a respectable person and you are making fun" I wasn't making fun. What is the purpose of life? To live!

Immediately you become aware of life you realise that it can't die. It flows. I have completely gone away from this thing called the purpose of life to the meaning of life. I am looking at life, I am becoming aware of life. To see these two fundamental characteristics of life. Life goes on ... flows on, flows on ... it cannot die. And it is a continuous flow. Continuous flux. Continuous

flux is apparently a contradiction in terms but when it is related to life it is supreme truth. If it is continuous it is not flux. There is a continuity in this. And yet it is constantly changing. It is constant and is also constantly changing. I still don't know what the purpose is but I see that this is what life is all about. What is the purpose of life? To live - because there is no choice. There is no alternative. You cannot die. I cut my hair. Some of you may cut off some organ which the surgeon may find superfluous, and sometimes the whole body may be considered superfluous and you drop it. But life has no choice but to live. To be alive to this is 'life'.

If you want to have a purpose, there it is; to be alive - to be alive constantly to this simple truth that life is continuous flux, unending. This is truth. This is not somebody's opinion. This needs no proof. Hence yogis call it 'swadhashta' - self-luminous, self-established. You cannot say 'life comes to an end'. Then it is not life; if it can come to an end then it is not life. If it is life it cannot come to an end. Water cannot be dehydrated. You can dehydrate potatoes, eggs, but there is nothing called dehydrated water. And therefore there is nothing called 'dead life'. Life never dies, but in the continuity there is continuous change. You know why? You may or may not appreciate the particular changes that your body and this body and your life and my life undergo, but that which does not change is dead, isn't it? Thank God and thank you and thank everybody that such a thing doesn't exist. According to even your scientists everything has life and therefore everything undergoes constant change, but if you can hypothetically visualise something which does not change, at all, it is dead. Life is continuous flux. I am not saying 'life is in a state of continuous flux' - you have heard that expression before. Life IS continuous flux. What does it mean? It means: TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED. You see the difficulty here? If I am going to take nothing for granted, I have to be alive all the time. The intelligence has to be fully awakened all the time. That seems to be not so desirable to the pleasure-seeking mind, eh? Have a glass of whisky! Aah ... I am going into samadhi! Anything that puts that intelligence out of commission, anything that destroys this inner alertness and awareness is self-destructive. But to be constantly awake, to be constantly vigilant, to be constantly alert seems to the pleasure-loving mind painful. It is not. We have somehow trapped ourselves into another strange absurdity. It may not be our fault but the linking is our fault. You fall asleep - aaah - and get up in the morning.

So nice. I didn't know anything at all. I wasn't aware of anything at all - my nagging wife or snoring husband or the problems in the family or in the house. I was unaware of all this and so was happy, happy, happy and peaceful - which is true! But happiness and this forgetfulness need not be causally related in that fashion. The mind picks up that sequence and weaves the causal relationship around it, and suggests, "Ah, that's very good ... I'm worried! I have to pay the bills and I have to do this and I have to do that and - I'm worried. What must I do? I must go to sleep. Well, the worry keeps me awake - that's the problem. What must I do?". A glass of strong drink - I don't know what you take - vodka? And then you go - aaahh. Aren't you happy? I don't know if I was happy. I'm merely putting the light out; the light that has been given to me; the light that is there; the light that I did not even kindle; the light that is my heritage, that is my birthright. I was born with it. If you observe a little infant you see how alive it is. It sleeps, so we sleep. But when it is awake it is totally awake, alert, alive. That light we are ever so eager to put out, in the hope that all the problems will go away. They don't go away. And from there on we have some obscure, strange, crazy logic in our mind that all we need to live a happy life here is not to think about it. If there is any problem, go back to the bar. If you have a problem, have a drink! If you have some more problems, a little stronger, and if you want to go into samadhi - hashish, marijuana, the lot! So the mind seems to think that to be alert is a painful situation. I don't know how this arose, but it probably arose in linking those two in a causal relationship, whereas they have no causal relationship at all. Sleep is a natural thing, a natural function of the body-mind psychosomatic being - personality. It has nothing to do with solving your problems. You do not solve your problems by going to sleep. When you wake up, the problems also wake up! Sleep is something natural. It may have its own lessons, we are not discussing that now.

To be alive, just as that little baby is alive - alive constantly! And to be alive to this two-fold truth: there is change and there is continuity in that change. You see how beautiful and how simple it is? Life is a continuous flux. The continuity frees me from morbid fear, "Oh, I am going to die. What is going to happen?" What does it matter if you die, now or a little later? "What's going to happen to my wife and children?" They will be happier. They will collect their insurance! Why do you think they are going to be

miserable or they are going to commit suicide or they are going to perish? They are not perishable, just as you are not perishable. Everything is changing but nothing is perishable! Simple! Even this present form has never been constant. Ten years' ago I looked different, fifty years' ago I looked very different, and yet there seems to be a continuity here. And so even the body is not really and truly perishable. If I happen to die in some place like this where the bodies are buried, you may even find tomatoes growing on top. Re-cycled swami! It's born - it's composed of the end-products of food and it's decomposed and given back to the source - whatever that may mean. Life is continuous flux. There is a continuity in it and when I realise that, it frees me from morbid fear. And there is a flux. It's constantly changing so that I can take nothing at all for granted. When I realise that then there is only one thing that I can rely on and that is this inner light with which I was born, in which I am able to function even now, whether I am an enlightened person or a stupid person. Please, let us not assume that the inner light shines only in the enlightened person and that we are without it. Even if we perceive the world in a perverted manner, even that is possible because of this inner light. Right?

The other day in Singapore I met an old woman who was suffering from eye trouble, developing cataracts, and I asked, "Can you see me?". She put on some glasses because one eye had been operated on. "Ah, now I can see you". Take off the glasses and see through the other eye which is developing a cataract. "I can't see you but I see some outline - some kind of dummy placed in front of me". The eye is able to see because of the light. That light is there. In your case now the eyesight is good so you are able to see me as perhaps I am. In the case of that lady, she is able to see a shapeless mass, which according to you is a perversion, but even that sight is made possible because she has that light. So no-one in this world is denied that inner light; it is there. The enlightened person is able to behold the truth as it is, in that light. The ignorant person sees the world in a perverted manner, but still because of this inner light. In his case the inner light shines through dense near-opaque lenses. Yoga is a way of clearing this rubbish.

How to clear this inner mirror? How to wipe it clean? How to keep it clean so that this inner light may shine and, in that light, action may proceed? There is no need for decision. The decision

is probably already made. Probably. I'm not interested in this. Do you understand? I'm not speculating that it is made or that it is not made. It is probably already made. Who made the decision that a beard should grow on this chin and not on that young woman's chin? (Thank God!) She might even want to. I hope not, but still ... Life, or the intelligence that indwells, knows what should happen. Because we think life is a sort of silly activity, we want to invent another thing called God who pushes this life and controls this life. Maybe life itself and this cosmic intelligence which you and I call 'God' are not different. Maybe they are one and the same - shakti and shakta. Anyhow, this life knows or is aware of what is to happen and how. I should clear the lens through which this inner light shines, illuminating the inner and the outer worlds so that there may be clarity of vision.

The rest of it takes care of itself. You do this in your yogasana also. It is an extremely simple thing. (Swamiji asks a friend to stand up) I am requesting her not to dance but to lift the right leg up - just a little. Please ... hold it ... I didn't ask you to resume. (Nola hops) Who makes her dance that way? Go on, again ... and again ... can you stand on the toes of the left foot - without dancing? There, you are a perfect lady! Up on your toes! Thank you, that's all. I didn't request her to dance, I only asked her to lift up one leg and get on the toes of the other leg. The rest of the movements take place - she didn't do it. Who makes all these movements? The yoga practitioner studies all those things. He comes to a very simple understanding right in the beginning of your yoga class - that I only think that this is my body. It is not. How can I say it is not? It doesn't obey me at all! If it is mine it should obey me. Right? It refuses to obey. She does some postures very beautifully and I also try and it says, "No - nothing doing!", however much I ... whew! What a sorry state of affairs. So I realise right from there that it is not my body. It has a will of its own. It has an intelligence of its own. It has mannerisms of its own, and I have no idea what it is all about. Why should I worry about it? But then, as I go on, I discover that there is some force, some power, some intelligence, even in this body which is able to take care of itself, to take care of the body. In that, there is continuous flux, continuous change. Let it go. And it is then that the yogi performs one of the most sacred actions, and that is surrender - self-surrender, self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice

is to make that self sacred. Sacrifice means to make something sacred - not cutting the throat of some poor little animal. And when I perform the yoga postures I am making the body sacred.

I realise that, first of all, the body is not mine. I am not the body and the body is not mine and, at the same time, there is a tremendous intelligence in this body which sustains this life in the body. Life, of course, cannot come to an end but it can decompose that body. It can withdraw itself from the body. There is a tremendous intelligence which keeps life and this particular body together, and that intelligence knows what should happen when. Our friend here would probably not even want to touch me normally, but while standing on her toes, if she collapses she would probably get hold of my neck. That intelligence knows; that life knows what to do and when to do it and how to do it. So the choice is not mine. The choice belongs to life, if there is a choice at all. If there is a decision at all, it belongs to that inner light, to that inner intelligence. What is my job? My job is to keep the mirror clean so that this inner light is not perverted. The very understanding or the appreciation of this inner light and its function - not purpose - its function instantly frees the mind and the heart from fear and its counterpart, which is the pursuit of pleasure. You cannot separate these two. As long as there is pursuit of pleasure there must also be fear. Fear of losing what gives me pleasure, fear of not getting what gives me pleasure, then fear of losing what gives me pleasure and all that. So when there is this clear understanding of this inner light then there is no fear at all and, at the same time, no pursuit of pleasure. Pursuit of pleasure. Life brings along pleasure and pain in its own flow. It flows. In this constant flow which is called 'life' there are some pleasant experiences, some not-so-pleasant experiences. Why do I qualify it so? Because what is pain, especially psychological pain except what you reject? If there is no rejection there is no pain. Well, it's not so comfortable as the other one ... wait for the other one - that will come soon. It's flowing ... you don't have to run after it. When you stand on the bank of the river you don't start pushing the river - go, go, go! ... You are there. Now a certain experience comes along - have it ... nice, lovely, and then a little later something else comes along - Oh lovely, very good. All right, if it is not very good, it is good! Life can be smooth, beautiful, simple and delightful if this inner light is able to shine without perversion, and that is simple, natural life.

❧ "I PRAY AND CHANT GOD'S NAME FOR THE PEACE OF THE WHOLE WORLD" SWAMI SIVANANDA ❧

Each time we gathered together with Swamiji, he would begin by chanting the Pranava Mantra OM, the divine sound. Then he would lead us in the introductory prayers, starting Jaya Ganesha. And each meeting or satsanga would close with the prayers printed at the end of this book.

Here are a few notes on translation:-

Ganesha is the Deity who protects us against failures and troubles. Sarasvati is the Goddess of Wisdom. Swamiji was initiated into the sannyas order dedicated to Sarasvati. Sivananda is the name of Swamiji's Guru. Venkatesa is the name of the Lord who destroys all sin and suffering. Jesus, Buddha, Rama and Krsna are incarnations of God. Santi is peace, the absence of all earthly ills.

The Guru Prayer has been translated by Swamiji in this way:-

The spiritual teacher is the Creator and the Protector of my spiritual aspiration and the Destroyer of evils and he is truly the Supreme Being Himself. Hence I bow to him. The Guru's form should be meditated upon, his feet worshipped, his words should be regarded as gospel, for his grace will lead us to Liberation.

The Concluding Prayers:-

We worship the Lord: may he liberate us from death.
May all be blessed with well-being, auspiciousness, peace and fullness.
May all be happy and free from illness.
May all see only good; and may no ill befall anyone.
Oh Lord, lead me on from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from mortality to Immortality.
The Lord is full; the creation is also full. The latter has come out of the Lord, and yet the Lord is ever full. Om peace, peace, peace.
May God protect us, may he guide us, may he give us strength and right understanding. May love and harmony be with us all. Om peace, peace.

VASISTHA continued:

Contentment is another gate-keeper to liberation. He who has quaffed the nectar of contentment does not relish craving for sense pleasures; no delight in this world is as sweet as contentment which destroys all sins.

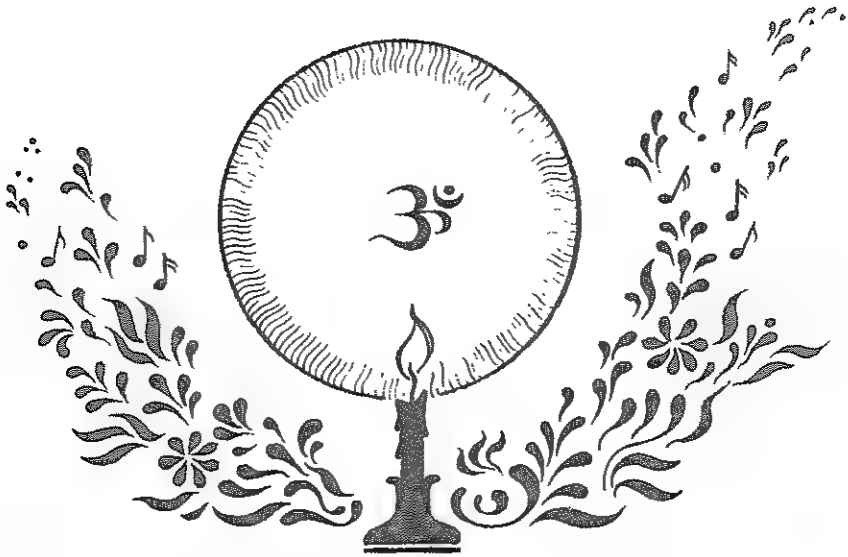
What is contentment? To renounce all craving for what is not obtained unsought and to be satisfied with what comes unsought, without being elated or depressed even by them - this is contentment. As long as one is not satisfied in the self, he will be subjected to sorrow. With the rise of contentment the purity of one's heart blooms. The contented man who possesses nothing owns the world.

Satsanga (company of wise, holy and enlightened persons) is yet another gate-keeper to liberation. Satsanga enlarges one's intelligence, destroys one's ignorance and one's psychological distress. Whatever be the cost, however difficult it may be, whatever obstacles may stand in its way, satsanga should never be neglected. For, satsanga alone is one's light on the path of life. Satsanga is indeed superior to all other forms of religious practices like charity, austerity, pilgrimage and the performance of religious rites.

One should by every means in one's power adore and serve the holy men who have realised the truth and in whose heart the darkness of ignorance has been dispelled. They who, on the other hand, treat such holy men disrespectfully surely invite great suffering.

These four - contentment, satsanga (company of wise men), the spirit of enquiry, and self-control - are the four surest means by which they who are drowning in this ocean of samsara (repetitive history) can be saved. Contentment is the supreme gain. Satsanga is the best companion to the destination. The spirit of enquiry itself is the greatest wisdom. And self-control is supreme happiness. If you are unable to resort to all these four, then practise one: by the diligent practice of one of these, the others will also be found in you. The highest wisdom will seek you of its own accord. Until you tame the wild elephant of your mind with the help of

these noble qualities, you cannot have progress towards the supreme, even if you become a god, demi-god or a tree. Therefore, O Rama, strive by all means to cultivate these noble qualities.



And Swamiji
suggested we hold
Satsang....



An Introduction to Satsang given by Swamiji entitled:-

THE SPIRIT OF SATSANG



For those who are new to this pattern of Satsanga, a few words. Since this satsanga is conducted in the name of Swami Sivananda, it is appropriate to mention that this was the pattern, the method, that the Master himself instituted. I am talking about pre-1950 days because afterwards it changed a little bit, and there was a lot of music and dancing and all that, but before 1950 when the Ashram in Rishikesh had just been founded, and life was more ascetic, more disciplined, if one may say so, this was the satsanga pattern that the Master gave us. I will first give you what happened there and then what the Spirit of Satsanga may be.

In summer the satsanga used to be conducted on the verandah outside Swami Sivananda's room. It was not very large. It could accommodate about 20 people and, in those days, there were not even 20 in the ashram, and there were just a few visitors.

In the winter-time the satsanga was held in the bhajan hall, the prayer hall, up the hill. There again, about 20 or 30 people could sit comfortably - and it was never full. By that I hope I have indicated that satsanga is not something which will ever become over-crowded and, perhaps, it should not be over-crowded. It will not be overcrowded because it will not appeal to everybody in the world, not even to all the people who profess to practice yoga. When you talk to somebody about yoga they will say, "What kind of gymnastics do you do?" Right? Now, let us take the summer program on the verandah of Swami Sivananda's own apartment. We would all be seated in two rows with a little overflow of visitors. The verandah of Swamiji's kutir has been built up now but in those days it was completely open. We would seat ourselves in two rows, and a few visitors might be there. There was no electricity so we had one of those hurricane lanterns, a paraffin lamp on a small coffee table. Precisely on the dot of satsang hour Swami Sivananda would open his door and walk in like a shot, like a bullet, and sit on his appointed seat in the middle of the two rows. He wouldn't talk to anybody, wouldn't look at them, nothing at all. Then immediately the person at the head of the left row starts the Jaya Ganesha as I did. As soon as that was over the person sitting next would read from the Bhagavad Gita. Even the hurricane lantern was so veiled

with paper that the light shone only on the book, otherwise it was darkened. He would read one chapter of the Gita, with or without translation and on the conclusion of that he would sing a kirtan - a chant. All of us would follow in chorus. Then the little table with the lamp would be passed on to the next one. Next one has the Upanishads. He reads a few words from the Upanishads and chants. All of us follow him in chorus. The table is pushed on. Next person might read something of Ramayana or Vishnupuranas or Bhagavatham or something. Like this three or four scriptures were chosen, and each person reading it follows it by a chant, which we follow in chorus. And as soon as the last person had finished he would nearly put out that paraffin lamp and put it away. Then everybody would sit in meditative mood and one after the other everybody had to lead the chorus. Now when she sings I follow in chorus and think I am an expert - I know everything, but then there is an illusion. When you leave me alone, what happens? When you ask me to lead, what happens? I fumble - then I realise that I was suffering from a false assumption - which is true of our whole life. We assume, "I can do that, I can do that, I can do everything!" Try to do it! That was the message. And one after the other it had to go on. It had to go on, whether you are a novice or an oldster or you are a visitor or a non-visitor, you are a millionaire or a pauper, each man or woman, child or boy or girl had to lead in the chanting and, because of this, I said earlier that it is better that the satsanga is not too over-crowded so that everybody has a participating chance, not merely in chorus, but everyone has to do something.

Before Swami Sivananda sat down he just glanced to see that all are there. Right. And so this thing goes on, like an assembly line. Now she has to lead in her chant, next it is her turn and if she is quiet for, let us say, 10 seconds, he would not be allowed to take over. He just sits quiet because it is her turn. I cannot take over. When there is an ominous silence for a few seconds it is only then that Swami Sivananda interfered. He had a flashlight and he would take that flashlight and press it. It came right on your face. "On, go on, go on!" "My voice is not good." "Your voice is not good? God knows your voice is not good, it is no news to Him. Go on, sing!" "I don't know ..." "Sing Rama Rama." Only then and also like a bullet, because the atmosphere would not be disturbed. Even in this little bit of dialogue he would not waste one word. It was just bullet-like commands:- "Go! Sing Rama Rama. That's enough!"

There was one man, just for example, who had just joined the ashram and he was not used to that kirtan and singing and all that. He was caught on the first night. Swamiji said, "On, go on!" "I don't know anything, Swami." "Sing what you know. Sing Rama Rama." "My voice is not good." "Never mind." Then he remembered he had heard at some of Mahatma Gandhi's meetings somewhere this: Raghupati raghava raja rama Patita pavana sita rama. But he didn't know the tune - he knew nothing - he had no idea what music ever meant. "Swami, you want me to say?" "Yes!" "RAGHUPATIRAGHAVARAJARAMAPATI-TAPAVANASITARAMA" And then the punishment was for all of us. We all had to repeat it in exactly the same monotonous tune which the leader had adopted. We were not allowed to correct him. All of us had to say, "RAGHUPATIRAGHAVARAJARAMAPATITAPAVANASITARAMA"! When all of us repeated in chorus after him, he was enthusiastic so he went on 10, 15 times. And then again, Swamiji might occasionally intervene by saying, "Krsna Bhagavan Ki Jay" - which meant, "Enough, next!".

Everybody had to do it, and when the last person had finished his chanting then Swamiji would conclude the satsanga. That is all. This talking, dancing, etc. came much later. But we always had the Arati though even the prasad was not distributed in those days. We had only the holy ashes. Ashes would go round and we put them on. Swamiji was very strict in those days, especially when the satsanga was held on his verandah. He would not talk to anybody, would not look at anybody. He would just quietly walk to his room and lock his doors. And he used to also suggest, advise, that those who participated in the satsanga quietly walked back to their rooms in the same mood, without disturbing that mood by chit-chatting and gossiping and all that. That was the style of Swami Sivananda's satsanga, which he liked, the original satsanga of Swami Sivananda. I have the feeling that that was what he liked.

Though it changed later on, I have the feeling that that is what he liked because:-

Firstly, it creates a mood in us;

And secondly, it brings home to us the realisation that the talking that is being done now is a waste of time.

You have heard hundreds of lectures, you admire the speakers, "Oh,

marvellous man, he speaks wonderfully, inspiring, thundering, and whatever it is ...", but nothing, nothing at all. I met 95 year-old Swami Gangeshwarananda in Canada and the States about two years' ago now and, at that time, they were organising a convention somewhere in the southern states and I had been told that he was also on the list of invitees. I asked him, "Swamiji, are you going?". He said, "Oh no, no, no. I don't believe in these conventions. Self-realisation is not given in these conferences. Speaker after speaker after speaker after speaker - and you don't even know who spoke! Self-realisation is not in these conferences. It is a good thing, it arouses some kind of curiosity, enthusiasm, it's impressive."

Impressing means 'pressing in', but nothing really happens. So talking, talking, talking, the whole thing is forgotten before the talk is concluded. And, by his style of satsanga, Swamiji had eliminated this talking boredom, at the same time pointing out that whatever anybody is going to say anywhere in the world is all there in this, in the scriptures that have already been introduced. What is not there - in the Bhagavad Gita or the Srimad Bhagavatham, or the Bible, or in the Yoga Vasistha, the Koran, Sufis, whatever it is - they are all there. We have heard them. We have ignored them, and so are people going to ignore the person who is talking, the fool who is going on talking.

You may ask someone who was at the ashram in Swami Sivananda's times, on how many occasions did Swamiji deliver a lecture? Hardly any! In the life of the ashram, probably Swami Sivananda would have talked, delivered a lecture three or four times a year. He was a listener. He let other people talk. If someone wanted to talk - talk! You want to talk - talk! Because as far as he was concerned it is a waste of time. The knowledge is there in the Gita, the knowledge is there in the scriptures. Read them! And see what kind of awakening is produced by reading them. And read them in the right spirit, listening with your heart to the message contained in them. That was the beautiful style that Swami Sivananda gave us and I think I have covered the most vital points. The point is not to think of number; the point is not to think of the value and who comes and who does not come; the point is not even to think of what am I going to read. Any of these, as far as possible, source scriptures. Do not go for any commentaries and things like that, for then you get 'polymix'. To the sources! And from there can

we get closer to truth? That is what satsanga means. Can I draw a little closer to this truth by communing with these words? If that is possible, we should be blessed!

In the ashram satsanga, even when there were so many people, the people in the satsanga were only few. I am not talking about people coming from far away, driving here, walking here and hitch-hiking here. People who were living next door would not attend satsanga. But Swami Sivananda was never perturbed about it. He never even ticked people off, "Why didn't you come to satsanga?". That is their business. You come and go when you want. Total freedom! But he was there and, very often, there were only two or three people in the satsanga. In later years when it was becoming difficult for Swamiji to move around very freely, and his movement was restricted, so that he could only come out of his kutir at a certain time and he didn't want to spend too much time outside, he had asked for satsanga to be commenced earlier. Sometimes there was only one man. This was about 1957. There was often just one man. He would sit and begin, "Jaya Ganesha, Jaya Ganesha, Jaya Ganesha", and read the Gita and, by that time, a couple of others might come. And then, slowly, they used to gather and, along with Swami Sivananda, there would come about 10 or 15 people. When there were 200 to 300 people in the ashram, there were 20 or 25 in the satsanga.

But one must understand the spirit and must get into the spirit, and once you get into the spirit, and go on listening to it, then something happens. The penny drops - occasionally, and not on every occasion, and not on every page that you read. Sometimes the penny drops here, sometimes the penny drops there. There is a time when I understand that, there is a time when I understand this, there is a time when I understand a third thing. If it has to happen, it has to happen! And so, until then, this satsanga must be kept going. Even I have wondered I have read the Yoga Vasistha once while translating it, once again while reading it through, once again after publication, but still when I listen to it suddenly, as Swamiji said, there is a shock. "My God, I didn't think of that before!"

There is a message. There is a beauty. There is a shock. There is a revelation. That is called SATSANGA.

So I request you to listen to the readings and, where possible, where you can, and even where you cannot, join in the chorus.

And one other request. Those of you who are close to here, you can come as often as you can to the satsanga here, but if you are a little far away, have your own satsanga. Small scale, large scale, Swami Sivananda often used to say, "Only one - one plus infinity - God is there with you." One plus infinity is more than anyone could imagine - so carry on - even two or three people.

If this habit can be formed then it can bring great blessings to our life.

HARI OM TAT SAT



A Few Jewels from Swamiji's treasure-house of wisdom, May 1979

Yoga is a complete reversal of dogma. Reverse dogma = AM GOD and, please notice, there is no 'I' in 'am God'.

Duty is not a fixed structure, it is dynamic.

All robes get taken off in the bathroom.

We were all born clean, pure, but with something unique in each one of us.

Do you know how to listen to the body and distinguish it from the mental cravings?

If a change has to happen it will happen.

Can you drop all your ego trips and be just natural?

Remove from your vocabulary and from your mind these two words: likes and dislikes.

Ego is nothing more than thought pollution.

When I feel I am everything, I am neither tempted nor threatened.

I am he in a subtle way. I think he is an idiot and quite likely he thinks I am an idiot - there's immediate rapport.

Belief is a springboard.

All hopes turn into soaps and keep slipping from your hands, and this will go on until the veil is lifted and the light is seen.

Never give up something that you love.

Do not disturb anybody's belief or faith.

Wherever there is love, that love is God.

There is nothing which is God-forsaken.

A deaf friend said, "I'm not deaf but everybody in the world has become dumb." That's what has happened to us. God has not disappeared but we have become blind.

Help each other, serve each other, but not with a sense of 'overwhelming' responsibility. Do it with great love.

You are living here an active life, that's God's grace; you have

a healthy body, enjoy it - it is God's grace; intelligence has been given to you, enjoy it - it is God's grace. All that has been given to you is His gift, enjoy it. And in the same way, give. You have received freely, give freely, and whatever you give - service, help, a smile - give it with love, inwardly feeling that each one of your actions is a flower which is offered at the feet of the omnipresent being.

We are surrounded by the Guru. Guru is in us, outside us, everywhere.

You've heard: Everyone is welcome to salvation. The Bhagavad Gita says you are already there, just realise it.

The same life and the same God dwells in a cat, a cow, I'm sure it dwells in a tiger, a cobra, a dog. A dog may show its love by guarding your house or by licking you; a cow shows its affection by giving you milk. How does a cobra show its love? It may kiss you, with great affection. And how does a tiger show its love? People who say, "Oh, I love fish, what do they do? Each one expresses its nature. God dwelling in all expresses His nature. It is our own limited mind which says love must be this way and not another way.

If God is in all and God is love, then nothing that flows from another person to me is other than love.

Judgment is a dangerous thing. The brain that judges constantly divides and, in addition to that, is arrogant.

There is not a single being in the universe that does not have love at heart.

Saturate your mind with God; saturate your heart with God; do everything for God's sake; salute the omnipresent God in all. You will surely reach me by this Yoga, by this harmonising yourself with God, with God as your only goal. Gita. Ch.9.34 - then the whole being is integrated and in the process of integration you grow into the image of God.

You are all manifestations of God. There is no teacher-disciple relationship at all. You are my God so I am merely offering even these words as flowers at your feet.

A Little Crystallized Honey - from Swamiji's 1980 Talks
(The complete talks are available as a beautiful book, titled
Total Love, printed by Sivananda Ashram, Beaconsfield, W.A.)

The word 'live' is a complete reversal of 'evil'.

Evil is not what scripture says. It is.

The key to life is the substitution of the 'I' with the 'O' to discover 'love'.

When the scriptures suggested that we shouldn't adore an image, it was the self-image, not these little images and idols, they are nice. I worship the image of my Guru.

Angels have fallen because of vanity.

The ego sense does not go away by merely wishing it would go away.

Often we have distorted but very strong images of what is what, and this extends to the so-called spiritual life.

Image-building builds hypocrites on the one hand and gullible, stupid people on the other.

Instead of entering God into your heart, enter yourself into God.

We are cells (souls) in the one Cosmic Body of God. It is a beautiful vision.

Only God exists or what exists is God.

God is not a concept. God is not something that can be described.

God is not an object of thought. Is God the subject? Maybe - in the sense of a cosmic subject. And that is why they say God is the witness of all hearts and minds.

When God pervades the entire universe, to whom will I run?
And into whose arms - when He and He alone is everywhere?

They who have learnt the art of sitting near God find self-control natural and effortless. Does it mean that the yogi doesn't eat, express emotions, get married, raise children, work or earn money? Everything is done.

You know the one impossible situation in meditation? That is

when you try to meditate. Feeling, "God you are infinite, I cannot meditate upon you, I cannot comprehend you", let yourself go. Then meditation happens.

A genuinely holy man is naturally beautiful.

To see Swami Sivananda open or close his spectacle case, to see him put it down with such love, with such reverence, was a joy.

In the practice of devotion one is allowed to make use of everything in order to grow in God consciousness.

Whatever form you wish to adore, please do, as long as you feel the presence of God there.

Psychoanalysis, psychological counselling, marriage counselling, etc., are often temporary and very often counter-productive because you don't love each other.

You say, "She is my wife and she must do this and she must do that ... and if she does all that, you love her. That is loaded love, which is a load not love.

All love based on human calculation is business, not love.

If you love me, the whole of you loves me, your heart, your mind, your body, everything. Then that love is real. Otherwise, where there are reservations there is something missing.

The 'I' dissolves and the 'you' dissolves and love remains. This is true of human relationship and of divine love. There is absolutely no difference. In that love you find what it is to be divine.

If two of you love each other, that love is real or valid only if there is non-difference - if there is not even the idea that you are different from me and, therefore, I love you. People may exalt certain attitudes, for instance, "I love you so much that I can subject myself to all sorts of inconveniences in order to satisfy you". I don't know if some of you have been subjected to this - to me it is a torture! This is not love at all, though normally it is considered to be the very height of love.

We love without asking questions, without motive, without a 'because' but we love (if there is a because) because we can't help it.

What grows on top of the head can be fashioned. What grows inside the head cannot be fashioned. You can change your hairstyle

literally at the drop of a hat!

One who abandons all selfish activity is a sannyasi. Gita Ch.18.2. He is a true, eternal sannyasi who longs for nothing and rejects nothing.

The beauty of sannyasa is that you learn to place an action where it belongs. In truth.

If you yourself are in God, who "does"? You don't!

Praying has somehow become so distorted that we have changed the spelling. We no longer 'pray', we only 'prey', and we are constantly preying upon God, "God give me this! God give me that!" That God is frightened - he doesn't come anywhere near us!

Real prayer is an expression of your love of God, not asking for anything at all.

Once you learn to abandon rewards for your actions, immediately you experience great peace.

If you had kept a log-book even for one year, and in it you had noted down what you did to-day, with what intentions, and what happened, you might discover something disgustingly beautiful - that most of the time what happened was completely different from what you intended it to be. Not just actions, even prayers.

Every solution that your mind produces for a problem becomes a worse problem. When you realise this you let yourself go - "Lord, I don't know what it is. Thy will be done."

As long as you feel that you can solve your problem, God will say, "All right, try a little more. No harm. You want to swim? Swim. Go on, try." When you say, "No, not possible, then He says, "Come on, I'll pull you out of it." Instantly!

When you recognise that what you need has already been provided long before the need arose, then something arises in your heart which may be called prayer. A tremendous burden is lifted off your shoulders.

To walk the path of Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Baba Muktananda or Swami Sivananda is not easy. To pretend to be like them is easy, and therefore it is of no use.

Is it possible for me to eradicate hate completely and totally?

Hate means a lot: envy, jealousy, ill-will and even fear.

There is no need to judge anyone. When you don't feel like accusing anyone, even forgiving anyone doesn't arise.

Swami Satchidananda gave me a beautiful idea when he said, "When you use the word 'mine', be careful - it might explode".

You can use that word 'mine' as long as you realise it is not true.

There is nothing called happiness and unhappiness, except in the dictionary or your mind.

You decide this is happiness, and then it becomes happiness. You pursue it thinking it is happiness, and because you pursue it, you call it happiness.

He who is not afraid of anybody and of whom nobody is afraid is my devotee. Gita Ch.12.15. Perhaps you are a very advanced yogi and not afraid of anybody, but how can you make it possible that no-one is afraid of you? If you have that cosmic vision only then it is possible - in your very presence everybody feels at ease.

Contemplation of the divine acts as a light that prevents the shadow of selfishness arising.

What do you mean by the 'darkness of ignorance'? As soon as you enter a darkened room with a candle, the darkness is gone.

The ultimate realisation of God is a gift of God. It is not for us to 'get' it.

Keep on repeating your mantra and He whose name it is knows that He is being called. He will come.

When you pass a church for a moment you think of God. When you see a holy person you remember God. In this manner let all these extraordinary phenomena remind you of God - the sun, the moon, the ocean, something marvellous, something wonderful. When you look at the ocean you remember, "The infinite is God"; when you look at the sky you remember, "The infinite is God"; when you look at the brilliant sun you remember, "That is a manifestation of God". Then you begin to see God in people who are handsome, beautiful, holy, kind, gentle, generous. Then it expands still further and includes all humanity and then all living beings and so on until, by God's grace, we are led into his cosmic presence.



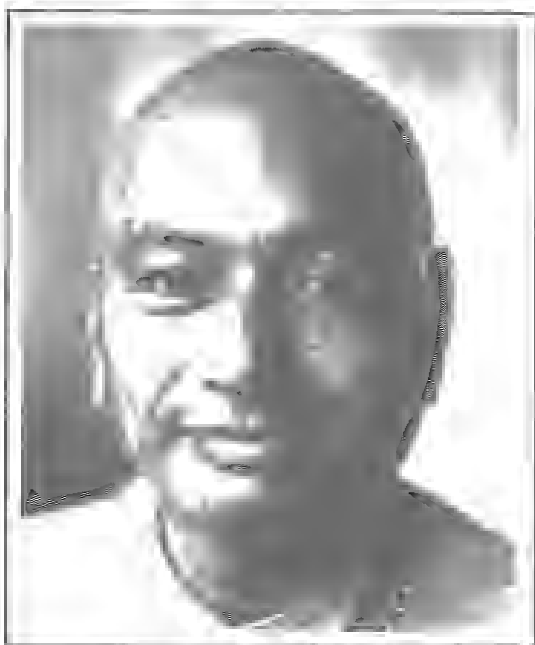
Swamiji's Song



Where will I go leaving you



I have given my body to you...



I have given my heart to you.



I have given my mind to you



Just say once I belong to you...



That's all, I will love you.





It doesn't take long to open your eyes



Keep turning towards the light



*With God's grace there is no
more doubt.*



*All that is needed has
already been provided*

How do you know which plane Swamiji is in? The one with the orange light on top! Twin headlights beamed through the grey light of early morning. We awaited Swamiji with the nicest anticipation as weeks of longing dwindled to the last few minutes. The plane drew into the bay beneath our window and passengers disembarked. It is Saturday, June 6, 1981, 6.15 a.m. Every passing face is quickly scanned. Did they have a happy flight with Swamiji? Then, that sudden exquisite shock as he is once again with us. Flowers, smiles, a swallowed tear and Swamiji's blessing. Oblivious now to the comings and goings of the airport, we are all happy to see Swamiji looking strong and well, and are delighted to know that he is again to be cared for by his devoted disciple, Kira. We go our separate ways until Sunday afternoon.

Swamiji's program begins with a talk at the I.Y.T.A. The subject is Karma. "As you sow, so shall it grow", Swamiji reverently paraphrased the Bible. Then he explored the laws of Karma at work in our relationships. The hurtful remark leaves an impression which is not cancelled out by a subsequent "sorry". Is it possible to discover why anger, jealousy, cravings, etc., arise instead of feeling that the only available course of action is either suppression or off-loading our negative emotions onto others?

Question-time raised the topic of brooding on a problem and Swamiji created total delight with his teaching that to describe depression as 'brooding' is an insult to the hen! A loving satsanga followed at the home of Jon and Amber.

On Tuesday evening, June 9, a large and varied group gathered at Harbord for the first of four evenings with Swamiji. Swamiji had invited H.H. Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission to join us. It was very moving to listen as these two great souls paid tribute to each other, and then to watch Swamiji as he showed us how to listen - utterly peaceful, constantly alert to Swami Ranganathanandaji's eloquent address. Swami Ranganathanandaji chose to speak to us on the three stages we may experience in life. Firstly, innocence and spontaneity, then loss of innocence and confusion and lastly, with God's grace, once again innocence and spontaneity. From wretchedness to blessedness is Yoga. Swami Ranganathanandaji concluded with a translation of a sanskrit verse: "You have got this human body by paying a heavy price of good actions you did in your

past births. It is like a boat. What is it for? To take you across the ocean of sorrow and delusion".

Over the following three evenings Swamiji guided us back into ourselves. What are the weaknesses, where are the strengths, why does this simple life seem to be so complicated? Are the oceans salty from all our tears? The path IS and with consummate skill, Swamiji again indicates the potholes and blind alleys, and encourages us to discover the supremely subtle way to Truth.

The following is a brief precis of Swamiji's talks.

"What is the problem to-day and how does the Master of yoga look at it? 'I' is the problem, born of ignorance. Every problem in life is an extension of this one difficulty called 'I'. Once we understand the nature of the problem-maker, the ego - which calls ignorance 'knowledge', we are no longer stuck with our problems. In sleep we are peaceful and undivided. Can we intuitively understand the real teaching contained in sleep. In waking consciousness the 'I' looks away from itself and so remains unaware of itself. Ignorance manifests as likes and dislikes and worry is the child born of like and dislike. And memories become 'me'.

"Words! If you are looking for wisdom, don't settle for words. Ego, mind, thought, I, you, all these are just words. Is there an intelligence which does not function at the level of words or sounds? 'Why on earth am I here?' When this question arises don't settle for a non-answer. That which can be grasped by the mind is an ego trip and therefore must be questioned. Do pleasure, pain, success, failure, etc. exist independently of thought? And what is the motivation for asking these questions? To arrive at the true answer the questioning must be beyond motivation. There needs to be 'seriosity' in this enquiry, a blend of seriousness and curiosity. Don't be too serious or you will get heavy or stuck. To be good and to do good is very good as long as it helps you on. Self-satisfaction is a danger. So what is the basic problem? Ignorance, which has been defined as 'that which vanishes upon investigation'. Ignorance of that which is beyond thought is the problem. Can you go beyond thought itself to an intelligence uncorrupted by thought, and can that intelligence be investigated without any motivation at all. It is here that we must tread the path indicated by the Guru. There need be no obstacles in our

sadhana if every experience or thought is integrated in the right way, remembering that, when it comes, suffering is an angel of grace.

To be ruled by the mind is humiliating. How to overcome confusion? The only saviour is Grace, obtained by total, active surrender to Guru and God. Do whatever has to be done in the spirit of surrender, following one's own unique path to the Master's realisation of Oneness. Imitation is either a waste of time or a disaster. The enquiry can start now with whatever is happening and with all experiences. Is the experience different from the experiencer? What happens in sleep is our reference point here. When thought does not create division between experiencer and the experience there is peace and joy. Direct investigation into the arising of the experiencer is what is called yoga. Therefore, obviously, this can be practised by everyone in all circumstances without making any radical change at the outset.

When you begin to investigate the truth concerning experience, pursuit of pleasure drops away and there is constant awareness. In order to develop constant awareness a practice called meditation is also prescribed whereby you may discover that there seems to be a division in the mind - I and me. When the division is healed and all the internal dialogue ceases, there is brilliant insight, hawklike in its vision. The final step is beyond the mind, where, through Grace, life is lived, 'with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your strength and with all your being'."

On Saturday afternoon Swamiji visited the home of Eve Sheaves. We sat in a circle with Swamiji and he warmly described us as a family gathering. He spoke beautifully of the need for harmony in life and cautioned against the seeds of disharmony, certain deadly beans - should have beans and might have beans. Swamiji then discussed the difference between hindsight (easily obtained), foresight (a matter of analytical ability) and insight, the quality worthy of a Master. From Eve's house in Baulkham Hills we travelled to the inner city suburb of Newtown and satsanga at Baba Muktananda's Ashram, where Swamiji delighted everyone with his vivid impersonations of Baba, chiding and cherishing his disciples. Swamiji spoke of Baba's intense self-discipline and his constant desire that we never hurt each other's feelings. Earlier we had all joined in the chant 'Jyota se jyota jagavo sadguru' (Light my

lamp from thy lamp, O Sadguru). Can those words become the living reality? Swami Shankarananda of the ashram thanked Swamiji for bringing to all that evening the same sweetness and strength that Baba's disciples love so much.

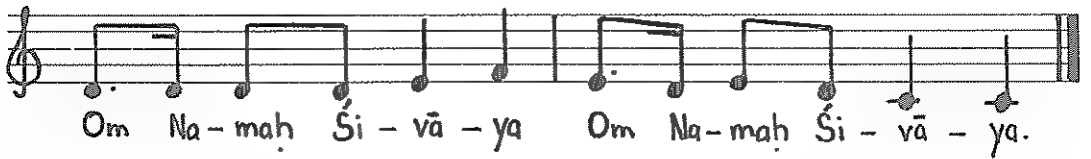
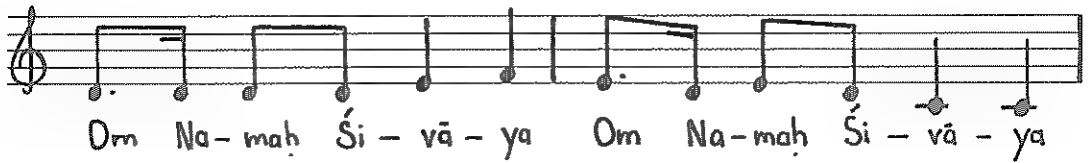
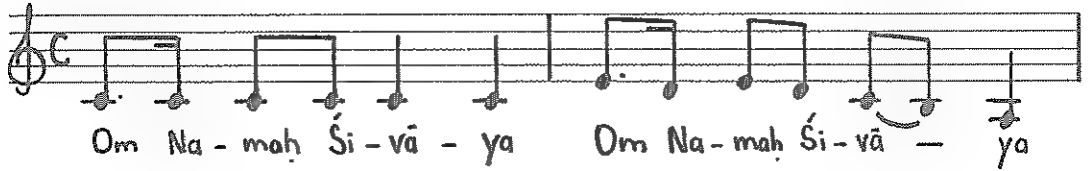
Mr. and Mrs. Maharaj of Padstow were our hosts for satsanga on Sunday, June 14. Total love, worship, bliss and that which is beyond words, and which is supreme blessings for all of us.

Sydney is a huge city and we are so grateful to Swamiji for his willingness to travel for so many hours to talk to so many people. Monday evening, therefore, meant more driving. This time to Hurstville and a talk at Amoon Jordan's Yoga-Health and Relaxation Centre. Swamiji reminded us that while there is a tendency to think of health at a purely physical level, true health is a state of wholeness and holiness. If hatha yoga is practised gently and intelligently then it can promote self-knowledge. Meditation can naturally flow on from hatha yoga so long as we never forget that meditation is 'heartlines' not headlines.

Following what we hope was a restful break in his busy program, Swamiji visited Caringbah on the evening of June 18 at the invitation of Fred Lehner to address a gathering at the Integral Yoga Institute. The Integral Yoga Institute is blessed by the patronage of H.H. Swami Satchitananda. Swamiji told us of Swami Satchitanandaji's great qualities of calmness in all situations, compassion for the sick and suffering, deep devotion and the true obedience of a disciple, where to carry out the wishes of the Guru is greatest joy and blessing. Swamiji also reminded us that, although it is natural and in every way desirable to deify the Guru, that adoration should also be tempered by the knowledge that the Guru is in all ways human. The Guru's supreme example of discipleship can inspire us to develop inner discipline, enabling us to look completely into ourselves, coming face to face with anxiety, fear, anger, desire, etc. Swamiji spoke of the transmission of wisdom which takes place when the mind of the disciple is quiet and the heart is wide open to the Guru.

Our time with Swamiji has come to a close for this year with a satsanga at Kira's house. It was all over so quickly. Would that it will last for ever. Thank you, Swamiji. Om Tat Sat.

Om Namah Śivāya



In April 1982 Swamiji taught us
Gita wisdom drawn from Chapter 1V

THE BHAGAVAD GITA
(THE SONG OF GOD)
CHAPTER 1V

The Blessed Lord said: I taught this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvan, he told it to Manu, Manu proclaimed it to Ikshvaku. This, handed down thus in regular succession, the royal sages knew. This Yoga by long lapse of time, has been lost here, O Arjuna. That same ancient Yoga has been to-day taught to thee by Me, for thou art My devotee and My friend. It is the supreme secret.

Arjuna said: Later on was Thy birth, and prior to it was the birth of the Sun. How am I to understand that Thou taughtest this Yoga in the beginning?

The Blessed Lord said: Many births of Mine have passed as well as of thine, O Arjuna. I know them all but thou knowest not. Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, ruling over my own Nature, I am born by My own Maya. Whenever there is a decline of righteousness, O Arjuna, and the rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age. He who thus knows in true light, My divine birth and action - having abandoned the body, is not born again. He comes to Me, O Arjuna. Freed from attachment, fear and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, purified by the fire of knowledge - many have attained to My Being. In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I go to them. My path do men tread in all ways, O Arjuna. Those who long for success in action in this world sacrifice to (worship) the gods, because success is quickly attained by men through (such) action. The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the differentiation of guna and karma; though I am the author thereof, know Me as non-doer and immutable. Actions do not taint Me, nor have I a desire for the

fruit of actions. He who knows Me thus is not bound by actions. Having known this, the ancient seekers after freedom also performed action; therefore do thou also perform action, as did the ancients in days of yore.

What is action? What is inaction? As to this, even the wise are confused. Therefore, I shall teach thee such action, by knowing which thou shalt be liberated from evil. For verily, the true nature of action should be known, as also of forbidden action, and of inaction; hard it is to understand the course of action. He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men; he is a Yogi and the performer of all actions. He whose undertakings are all devoid of desires and selfish purposes and whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge - him the wise call a sage. Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of actions, ever content, depending on nothing, he does not do anything though engaged in activity. Without hope and with the mind and the self controlled, having abandoned all greed, doing mere bodily action, he incurs no sin. Content with what comes to him without effort, free from the pairs of opposites and envy, even-minded in success and failure, though acting, he is not bound.

To one who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who works for the sake of sacrifice, the whole action is dissolved. Brahman is the oblation, Brahman is the clarified butter. By Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire (Brahman). Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action. Some Yogis perform sacrifice to the gods. Others offer as sacrifice Yajna in the fire of Brahman. Some again offer hearing and other senses as sacrifice in the fire of restraint. Others offer sound and other objects of the senses as sacrifice in the fire of the senses. Others again sacrifice all the functions of the senses and those of the breath in the fire of the Yoga of self-restraint kindled by knowledge. Others again offer wealth, austerity and Yoga as sacrifice, while the ascetics of self-restraint and rigid vows offer study of scriptures and knowledge as sacrifice. Others offer as sacrifice the Apana in the Prana, and the Prana in the Apana, restraining the courses of the Prana and the Apana, solely absorbed in the restraint of the life-force. Others who regulate their diet offer life-breaths in life-breaths. All these are knowers of sacrifice, whose sins are destroyed by

sacrifice. Those who "eat" the remnants of the sacrifice which are like nectar go to the eternal Brahman. This world is not for the man who does not perform sacrifice; how then can he have the other, O Arjuna? Thus, manifold sacrifices are spread out before Brahman. Know them all as born of action and thus knowing, thou shalt be liberated. Superior is wisdom-sacrifice to the sacrifice with objects. All actions in their entirety, O Arjuna, culminate in knowledge.

Know that by prostration, by question and by service, the wise who have realised the Truth will instruct you in it. Knowing that, thou shalt not, O Arjuna, again get deluded like this; and by that thou shalt see all beings in thy Self and also in Me. Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge. As the blazing fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge reduce all actions to ashes.

Verily, there is no purifier in this world like knowledge. He who is perfected in Yoga finds it in the Self in time. The man who is full of faith, who is devoted to It, and who has subdued the senses obtains knowledge. And, having obtained the knowledge, he goes at once to the Supreme Peace. The ignorant, the faithless, the doubting self goes to destruction; there is neither this world nor the other, nor happiness for the doubting. He who has renounced actions by Yoga, whose doubts are rent asunder by knowledge and who is self-possessed - actions do not bind him, O Arjuna.

Therefore, with the sword of the knowledge cut asunder the doubt of the Self born of ignorance residing in thy heart and take refuge in Yoga. ARISE, O ARJUNA!

Guna Traya Vibhaga Yogo Nama Caturdaso'dhyayah



Does the sun hold any degrees in illumination? Without any diplomas, there is spontaneous knowledge.

That which shines in the sun shines in what is called 'me'. So that when the sun has set, when the moon has set, when there is no light, in the dark, you still know which your right arm is. Fantastic, isn't it?

One who turns within to see, to become aware of this inner light, is never confused. What is of greatest importance is to be able to see what is going on within oneself.

Light is not meant to be sold. Light is for free distribution. The sun shines without any thought of practical use, without any thought of helping or not helping, without any thought of a reward, without even intending to shine. Can your inner light shine in that spirit?

The moment a fruit ripens on the tree, it lets it go, unattached, but we are all the time seeking a reward. Do something out of love, and go away. Let the other person offer out of love. Give what you have freely, and let others share what they have. But not as a ritual.

Selfishness is not something which can be described to us by someone else. It has to be discovered each one by oneself.

If the inner light is there, then it is possible to treat life itself as the guru, sorrow itself as the greatest spiritual awakener. If you observe when sorrow arises in you, you have found the ego, and if you look at the ego, you have found God. When the ego is looked at, it is gone and you see God in its place.

All the great masters emphasise that life itself is the best teacher. Pain is an excellent teacher. Sorrow, grief, unhappiness, adversity are all your teachers but do you learn?

To raise the feeling that all that is born must die and that everybody is subject to illness and old age, that's an entirely different type of wisdom. But still there is something which says, "No, I'm not subject to that".

Someone asked a very wise man in India what is the cause of illness.

He said, "Birth".

There is one type of knowledge which is bread-winning knowledge and another type of knowledge which is directly relevant to our lives, and that knowledge is not found in books. That knowledge is not even transmissible. It arises in us.

Bread-winning knowledge is merely a tool. The other knowledge that wells up in you is the knowledge that prevents you becoming fools.

Is it possible that, with the help of the knowledge called 'knowledge' we are blocking the arising of true knowledge? This is a very important question which I hope you will contemplate.

Isn't this our disease? This eagerness bordering almost on an anxiety to make use of all that comes into our hands. And isn't that the source of our problems? Watch this!

When does a relationship sour? When you start making use of each other.

In this world wise people are not in such great demand. Clever people are. So, if you are a wise person, you'll be happy, you'll be peaceful - no doubt - but you may not be prosperous according to the accountant round the corner.

Cleverness is a dangerous thing. I'm not saying that you should be un-clever, but cleverness, when it encroaches upon the field of wisdom, forfeits the only open door to wisdom.

When a thing is not understood, the ego does not want to accept that it is not understood and therefore it creates a misunderstanding. That's a fantastic joke.

When you realise that what the world is, is of no concern to us, it is our reaction that's important to study. In the same way, what you and I are thinking or feeling is of absolutely no importance to somebody else. When that lesson goes home then you feel stupid to entertain ill will towards others. When you realise that thinking ill of others, hating others, being jealous of others, etc. is only hurting me, then you instantly drop it.

Life goes on regardless of what you think.

When the world and all that is in it, including our relationships, are seen in their true light, which is the inner light, there is

nothing to be worried about, nothing to cling to, nothing to kick, nothing to fear.

A teacher is nothing more than a pointer. To look is your problem.

Insight can be communicated mostly non-verbally. But if there is what is called verbal communication, it is as a concession to human inadequacy. The greatest of teachers have been silent.

When you went to Swami Sivananda and asked him a transcendental question, he would often look at you very affectionately, lovingly for a couple of minutes and then ask, "Would you like tea or coffee?".

The first essential thing, if you want this communication to take place between you and the Master is surrender.

Go to a guru, a great master, a teacher and don't talk. You have talked enough and you have had your internal dialogue for a long, long time - now shut up! If you examine your own anatomy you will probably understand this a great deal easier. The ears are always open, the eyes can be kept open or closed very easily, and the mouth is beautiful when shut. To prevent accidental use of the tongue there are 32 teeth. The lesson is: keep your mouth shut, open your eyes or close them depending on what you are seeing but keep your ears open.

You have had lots and lots of ego trips. Failed Then you go to this enlightened person and use this same ego trip there also. It won't work! So they say, surrender yourself to him, and through service, get into tune with the teacher then ask one word - or one word in reply - or maybe just a smile, and the job is done!

The truth is very simple, and that simple truth is missed because the ego that is the problem is kept active even in the field of religion or spirituality.

The role of the teacher, the guru, is to spread this inner light, mostly non-verbally, in order that we might be freed from these three qualities: likes, dislikes, and fear - by merely seeing the world as it is, and not as we think it is.

Swami Sivananda used to say very often, "I have sown the seed. It will germinate in its own time".

It is not learning about holiness but inhaling the fragrance of holiness.

The world that has been hanging heavily around our shoulders suddenly becomes light. That is called 'enlightenment'.

If you become aware of the body itself, and the way it functions, you will instantly realise the truth that the body has no ambitions concerning the future whatsoever, and the body does not live in the past. The body does not live on hopes.

Is there a 'me' which is independent of memory? Or is 'me' merely the abbreviation of the word 'memory'?

Instead of digging into your past and paying the psychoanalyst, become aware of what you are now. Your present mind is the totality of the past. Become aware of what it is now and you are free.

What has been, has been. Finished! This me is not exactly the product of the past. The me is the past. It is a sort of congealed energy, trapped energy. And this built-in energy in the body and in the mind will continue to function.

Ambition or craving or intense desire, far from enabling right action to take place, blocks it. A person who is calm is more likely to succeed than a restlessly ambitious person.

Life is action, life is motion and life will find its own path.

How does one purify oneself? Not by saying I will do this or I will not do this, because in both cases it is the 'I' that determines, because it wants something else - some recognition, somebody's approval, some name, some fame, etc., and that perpetuates unclarity.

Future is nothing but hope. Why does hope arise? Because of fear.

A catholic priest must be single, a rabbi must marry. What is holiness? All these people are holy. What is right conduct? Who defines it?

First of all be a human being.

Dharma is one's own essential nature. It is that nature that holds you together, your personality together, and holds all of us together, and all of us with the entire universe together. The ecological system. That is dharma. Anything which disturbs that is adharma. It doesn't matter how altruistic it may sound. When that disturbance happens on a personal level or a social level or international level or intercontinental level or intercelestial level,

there is a manifestation of some intelligence which restores this balance. That intelligence is called 'insight'.

The entire life of the whole universe is one of constant transformation. Change means one form ceasing to be and getting involved in another form. And the Master says, if you understand that, you have understood the entire universe.

We are all interdependent and that interdependence means one sacrificing to the other. The seed sacrifices itself and produces the tree. The tree sacrifices itself and produces fruit. There is an interconnectedness throughout the whole universe.

What you do affects me and what I do affects you. We are completely and totally interwoven into the fabric of the world.

The concept of immortality or the concept of eternal life is a witness merely to the fear of death. You cannot attain immortality. Nonsense! Imagine all these rascals becoming immortal! What is liberation then? Death. Bring it right in and you are instantly free. The insight becomes aware because it is awareness that the truth is always there. It undergoes change - that's not my problem. God created the world, that's his problem. Why do you worry? Then this very world becomes the playground of the spirit. Everything connected with it, whether you called it pleasure before, or pain before, happiness or sorrow, are all transformed instantly into bliss, the play of God.

If you don't investigate the truth, you hang on to a myth, and that myth becomes truth somehow.

When a craving arises and you set up an equally strong restraining force, that is when it is possible to come face to face with the ego. There is absolute stillness, absolute balance. You are neither yielding nor driving it away. Both come from the ego. Then suddenly the light shines on the shadow called the self.

When you see all things in God, there is an awareness that we are all ripples in that cosmic ocean. I am - but I am not mine. Just as this body belongs to the earth, it came out of the earth, it is sustained by the things that grow on this earth, even so this spirit or the self is but it is not what it has been mistaken to be. It is enlightened. It suddenly becomes holy, because the erring ego has gone.



The final few words from the final talk by H.H. Swami
Venkatesananda in Harbord on April 13, 1982.



The enlightened soul has realised that the 'I' is no longer an enduring entity. You learn this only from direct contact with great holy persons, a holy man or woman. The Masters are not so rare but the serious, earnest student is very rare in this world, and if you are earnest students you will find the Master at your doorsteps, somehow, somewhere, sometime. And, even if you have the constant company of the greatest amongst the Masters, please remember they will only awaken your aspiration and keep the door open for you. You will have to take the steps to get out.

I remember one verse which Swami Ranganathananda taught me last year. He sat here and repeated a verse which got stuck instantly in my mind and heart. This verse says: "You have purchased this human body, which is a boat, at very great expense, the price paid being merit earned over a long, long period of time. And why have you bought it? To cross this ocean of sorrow." And, therefore - get across before the body breaks down!

One who has this aspiration will find the Master easily - there's no problem at all and, with the help of that Master, one should endeavour every moment to find this ego that is the ocean of sorrow.

The enduring ego is the ocean of sorrow and the moment that is discovered the ocean dries up, like the famous Biblical Red Sea. The sea parts and you are able to walk through quite peacefully and blissfully.

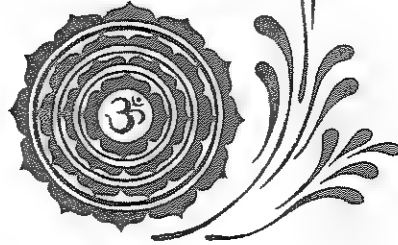
HARI OM TAT SAT

May your whole life
be happy and laughing
and smiling Swami Venkatesananda



I have done all that
needs to be done,
everything I wanted
and a little more ~
There is no frustration
no regrets
I am ready to go ”

Swami Venkatesananda
2 weeks before
His Mahasamadhi





Swami Venkatesananda was born in the Tanjore district of South India on December 29, 1921. As a young man he worked in Madras in Civil Defence during the war and later with the government in Calcutta, then Delhi. There was only admiration and praise for his work and promotion was most rapid.

But his government career was short for in 1944 he met Swami Sivananda and though the meeting was brief, the effect was penetrating. From the age of twelve, Swamiji was practicing yoga postures, pranayama and meditation, studying books by Swami Sivananda and Swami Vivekananda. He practiced seriously and largely alone. The spiritual hunger grew, and in 1937 he wrote to Swami Sivananda offering his service. But the Master advised him to wait and continue his practices at home: "I have no ashram; I myself live on kshetra bhiksha (alms)".

The time was not ripe. But in 1945 the moment came and Swamiji left for Rishikesh, Himalayas and Swami Sivananda, never looking back, for he had left nothing behind, or rather the reality of what was behind had evaporated in the fire of renunciation. In September 1947 he entered the swami order as Swami Venkatesananda. For seventeen years he remained in Rishikesh, ever close to his Master, editing and publishing his books, serving him in every capacity and absorbing his teachings until he became them. He was the ideal disciple, and indeed it was this ideal of perfect discipleship that remained his touchstone throughout his life. No higher compliment could be bestowed than these words of his Master: "Crest jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my work. Will I ever see anyone shine brighter than he, Swami Venkatesanandaji? Surely none have I seen so far."

In 1961 Swamiji was invited to South Africa and Australia. The quiet swami began to speak and his attraction was magnetic. He shone, he sparkled and everywhere the response was enormous. It

was three years before the visit ended. Invitations followed from Madagascar, Mauritius, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Israel, Europe and North America and, as the years passed, it became clear that his home was his residence of the moment and his family the hundreds who were drawn to him seeking direction, peace and truth.

As his travels widened, so his writings grew: a biography of his Master, a series of books on the various aspects of yoga practice and philosophy, a comprehensive book on yoga, a daily guide to the Bhagavad Gita, Daily Readings drawn from the essentials of Swami Sivananda's teachings, and original translations from the sanskrit of the Srimad Bhagavatam, the Ramayana, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the Yoga Vasistha and treasures from Buddhist scriptures. Numerous smaller books appeared in response to questions and needs of friends and seekers and his lectures have been published in many countries and in several languages. In all a total of more than eighty titles.

This dynamic spiritual energy vitalised those whose lives he touched. Informal groups sprang up, housewives and business men discovered that they were yoga teachers, and gradually a number of yoga centres and ashrams were born in his name. Swamiji is Patron of the Sivananda Yoga Ashram, Swami Sivananda Road, Rose Hill, Mauritius, The Sivananda Ashram, P.O. Box No. 2, South Fremantle, West Australia, 6162, The Seven Hills Ashram, Gooderham, Ontario, Canada, Ananda Kutir Yoga Association/Trust, Ananda Kutir, 24 Sprigg Road, Rondebosch East, Cape Town, South Africa, and the International Yoga Teachers' Association. In addition the Chiltern Yoga Trust, P.O. Elgin 7180, Cape Province, South Africa was formed to publish his books. Branches have now been formed in several countries. Apart from these formal organisations, many small groups, yoga schools and Satsangs hold Swamiji as their heart and inspiration. A yearly schedule of invitations kept Swamiji circulating around the world, lecturing, conducting seminars - wisdom ever-flowing from that still centre that is his true home.

These are the facts of Swamiji's life, but what is their significance? What is the unique impact that made Swamiji's very acquaintance unforgettable? The secret is the same for all Masters. The secret is pure spirit, unfettered by the ego, by convention, totally new each moment - a free-flowing channel of the divine.

We have an image of a yogi - but pure spirit may not fit. Purity, goodness, power cannot be moulded into even the loftiest of images. The impact is totally unexpected. The surprise is breath-taking and in the shock some of those ineffable qualities may penetrate to the level where there is recognition, the startling recognition of a mirror-image in which self recognises self and those very same qualities vibrate deep within. It is the most blessed reunion.

In only such subjective words can one describe Swamiji, because objectively he may be nothing - nothing that one could pin down as this or that. He has been a transparent window through which one might glimpse truth, the most highly polished mirror in which you recognise that truth as yourself.

Moral and spiritual advice is easily available - there is a supermarket choice in the world to-day. But where could one find knowledge that is direct, silent and inexpressible? Only in the presence of a Master like Swami Venkatesananda. This knowledge cannot be taught and therefore Swamiji was not a teacher in that sense. The process of discovery is not even 'a doing'; it is a happening without reference to the ego, and nothing is imposed, nothing is done, but in Swamiji's presence a non-violent revolution took place; the idea of the self was toppled from its throne and peace ensued. Such is a Master. Such is Swami Venkatesananda.

On the night of December 1, 1982, a full moon shone over Johannesburg and the vortex of energy that we called our beloved Swami Venkatesananda began to flow back to the source. At 13.50 on December 2, the vessel that had been offered to Swami Sivananda in 1945, lay still.

When he walked with us, when he laughed with us, his supreme brilliance was often veiled from our eyes, though for each one who knew him there were moments of profound vision. Now that the gossamer cage is broken, the beloved is ever free to dance in our hearts.

We called him Swami Venkatesananda but universal energy cannot be named. We say that he was born and died, but infinity may

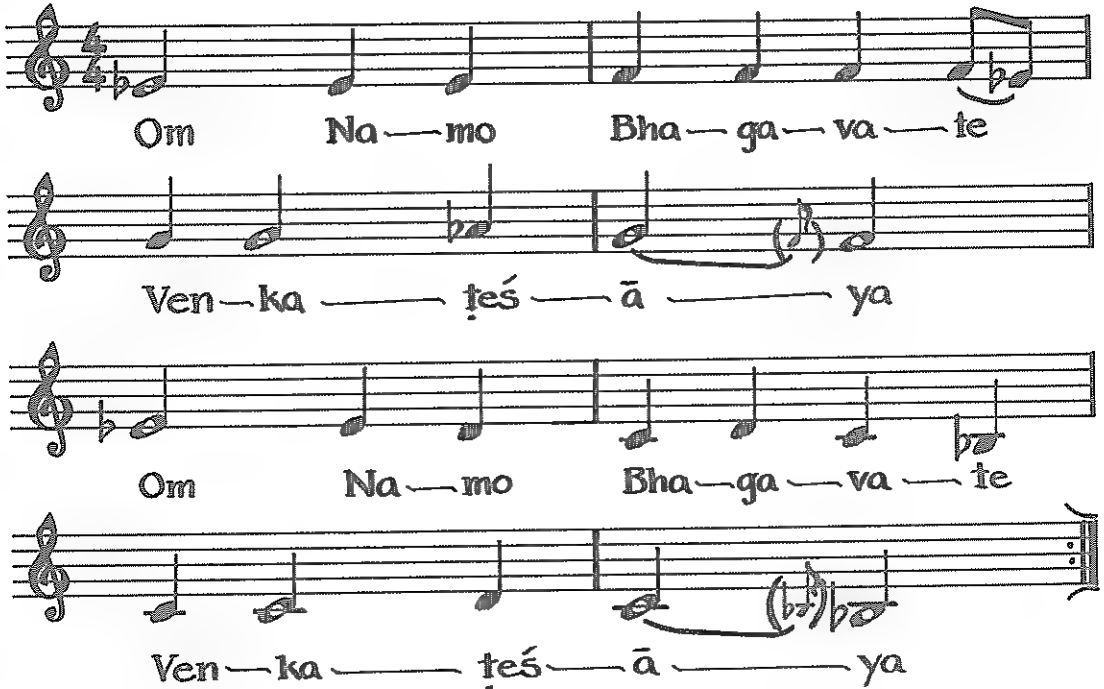
not accept the parameters of time. What he was, that he is -
and THAT THOU ART - TAT TVAM ASI.

8th December 1982.

Swami Sushila
Johannesburg.



Om Namo Bhagavate Venikaṭeśāya



About 90 miles south of Madras, rising steeply out of the hot plains below, are the sacred hills of Tirumalai. Here, at the beginning of the present epoch, the Lord Venkatesa came to dwell. Venkatesa means 'the Lord who destroys all sin and all suffering'. As an incarnation of Krsna he has come to dwell permanently on earth, as a guide and inspiration to those who worship him.

About fifty years' ago it would not have been uncommon to see one small boy climbing lightly, with anticipation and eagerness, from the small village of Tirupati which nestles at the bottom of the hills, up the steep mountainside towards the shrine. Even to-day, when a winding road takes bus-loads of devotees to the summit, the climb on foot is not an easy one for the mountain is a wild and rugged place. But in those days it was a dangerous expedition. If he climbed at night large scorpions lay on the steps and wild animals roamed in the forests near the top. In the day the sun beat down mercilessly.

Such was his love and devotion for God in this particular incarnation, that many years later when this same boy had joined Swami Sivananda's ashram in Rishikesh and was given sannyas, Gurudev chose the name Swami Venkatesananda for him. So it was that Swamiji became the living embodiment of Lord Venkatesa, the God who only looks at us with love. In most murtis (images of a divine being) Venkatesa is depicted with his eyes covered in front leaving only the corners free. The Lord thus assures man: "Whatever you may be, when you come to me I do not frown on you; I can only look through the corners of my eyes and therefore only with love". So it was with Swamiji. Whoever came to him, whether young or old, from all corners of the earth, they were only given love.

With his right hand raised Lord Venkatesa indicates: "Take refuge at my feet", and the left hand held at thigh level indicates that, when you do so, the ocean of misery which worldly life is here will only come up to thigh-level, and you will not drown in it.

By worshipping Lord Venkatesa we can awaken the divine within ourselves. Witness to this are the thousands of worshippers who file silently past the Lord each day in adoration, while music and

singing from the great Hindu epics is relayed from the temple into the surrounding villages. Long before sunrise queues of devotees are already waiting.

It is because of Swamiji that we in the western world have been blessed with the vision of Lord Venkatesa. To-day there are murtis in almost every country he visited, and the ritual of Puja (worship) is now familiar to many western people. Many of us have had the rare privilege of visiting the temple itself, but for those of us who haven't, we have indeed easy access to the divine.

Symbolically, our worship of Venkatesa is as precious as if we were visiting the shrine itself. It is a worship offered with love from the heart. It is our way of saying God is with us, God is in us and God is in everything whether sentient or insentient. So it is that we offer flowers to the Lord during Puja. Thus we offer all our actions as flowers at the feet of the omnipresent Lord, regarding all beings we come into contact with and serve as the Lord's own images.

During a chant from the Vedic texts we bathe the image, and in so doing we bathe the Lord with our love. We place sandal paste on the forehead signifying the Lord's pleasure with the merciful 'the forbearing person who gives of his fragrance to one who injures and grinds'. During the ceremony incense is burned. Thus the unseen fragrance pervades the atmosphere, just as the fragrance of the Lord is experienced yet unseen. Towards the end we offer fruits to the Lord, symbolising the offering of the fruits of our actions, and during the arati (worshipping the Lord with lights) we burn camphor. Camphor burns without leaving a residue. Even so may we adore the Lord and be totally absorbed in Him so that there is no trace of evil left in our lives.

Through Puja, there is both the privilege of worshipping Lord Venkatesa and a means of expressing our lasting gratitude to Swamiji for the few precious years when we were blessed with his wisdom, teaching and love.

OM ***** OM

Shanti

"Yes, it is very good to have satsang at least every Sunday. If this is regular, then people come to know of this and they come; if they cannot make it one Sunday, they know it is still on the next Sunday. The number of people does not matter at all. Here in Mauritius we have the satsang every day; on some days there are over twenty and on some others perhaps only six. This was so even in the ashram in Rishikesh, where there was a resident population of over 200; the attendance at satsang was anything between 10 and 30."

"It is in trying to express oneself that one is made to expose oneself to oneself and thus to discover that perhaps there is nothing to discover within oneself."

"'Irritability' is not so easy to deal with: even when you congratulate yourself that it is gone it lies in wait to take you unawares! It goes only when the awareness is never lost, by the grace of God. However, even to be able to rouse this awareness 'after the event' is a step in the right direction."

"You have drawn a parallel between weeding the garden and weeding the mind. As a matter of fact, 'culture' and 'horticulture' have everything in common."

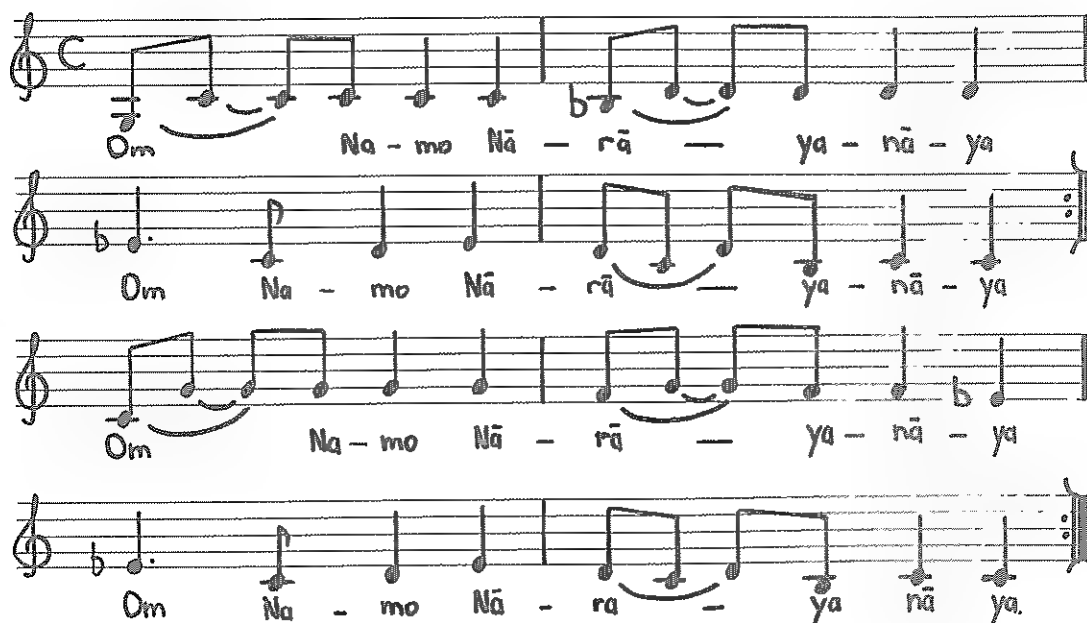
"You have written about the callousness of youth. I heard a very similar remark from Swami Sivananda himself: "If I had known then that I had such important work to do later in life, I would have conserved my energy and not overworked then". What the future holds no-one knows! Sometimes one feels, "It is better to be cautious now so that there may be more years of service." On the other hand, there is also the feeling, "What difference does it make: whether I live intensely and most fruitfully for a few years or I drag on for a number of years doing even less!". "Why are we born, why are we ignorant, why do we die?" When the first and the third questions are asked, the middle one is answered! We are no longer satisfied to be ignorant. The other two questions then resolve themselves into:

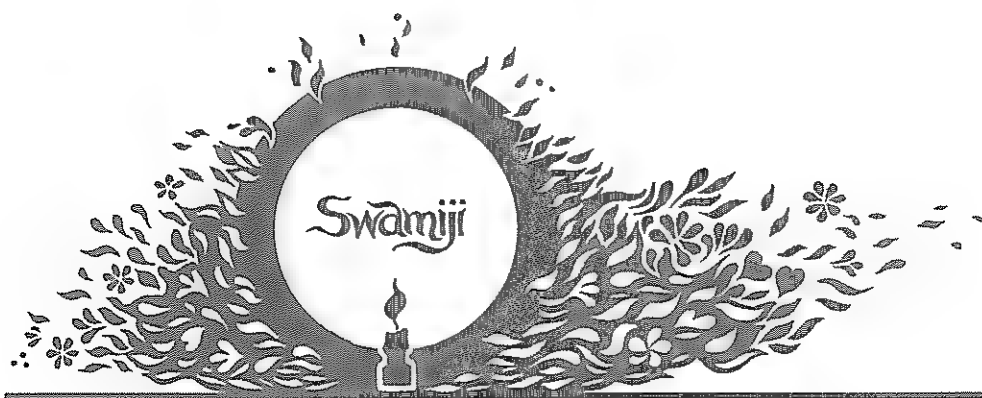
"There is no reason why we should be born or why we should die - hence we are neither born nor do we die. A dream arises ... a little later another dream arises."

"You have said that "for me, Swami Sivananda is alive through your words". That is not entirely so. Our words do not do full justice to him. He is alive, and hence the words have meaning. If you feel inspired at all, it is surely due to his grace. I do not think that human words can adequately describe him."

"Dreams: I have often wondered about dreams. But that has always been after waking up! Who can interpret dreams except the dreamer (not after waking up)? To the dreamer the dream is not dream, but life. Perhaps Life is but another dream."

Om Namo Narayanaya
Om Namah Sivanandaya
Om Namo Venkatesaya





I once saw Swamiji like a glowing candle,
And all the room grew dark around Him,
Grey shadows moved and spoke.
He drew me as a moth towards Him
And, through my tears
I knew joy.

I gave my heart
Patched and shabby remnant that it was ~
And
From the seamlessness of His own perfection,
He gave unbroken love and light.
More gifts too
Meditation and satsanga and
Puja to the sweetest Lord,



And,
At the time of His physical death,
Remembering His love,
I clung to them and didn't fall
Into the abyss.

And Swamiji said,
Cling to all these now
And in the time ahead on this earthy plane
However long or short
Doing whatever you do
And see, in every corner of your life,
The colours of my love.





Om Namo Venkatesaya



MAHA MRTYUNJAYA MANTRA



OM TRAYAMBAKAM YAJAMAHE SUGANDHIM PUSTI VARDHANAM
URVARUKAMIVA BANDHANAN MRTYOR MUKSIYA MAMRTAT



ARATI



OM JAYA JAYA ARATI VIGHNAVINAYAKA
VIGHNAVINAYAKA SRI GANESA
JAYA JAYA ARATI SUBRAHMANYA
SUBRAHMANYA KARTIKEYA
JAYA JAYA ARATI VENUGOPALA
VENUGOPALA VENULOLA
PAPAVIDURA NAVANITACORA
JAYA JAYA ARATI VENKATARAMANA
VENKATARAMANA SANKATAHARANA
SITA RAMA RADHESYAMA
JAYA JAYA ARATI GAURI MANOHARA
GAURI MANOHARA BHAVANI SANKARA
SAMBA SADA SIVA UMA MAHESVARA
JAYA JAYA ARATI RAJARAJESVARI
RAJARAJESVARI TRIPURASUNDARI
MAHA LAKSMI MAHA SARASVATI
MAHA KALI MAHA SAKTI
JAYA JAYA ARATI ANJANEYA
ANJANEYA HANUMANTA
JAYA JAYA ARATI DATTATREYA
DATTATREYA TRIMURTI AVATARA
JAYA JAYA ARATI SANISCARAYA
SANISCARAYA BHASKARAYA
JAYA JAYA ARATI SADGURUNATHA
SADGURUNATHA SIVANANDA
JAYA JAYA ARATI SADGURUNATHA
SADGURUNATHA VENKATESA
JAYA JAYA ARATI VENUGOPALA





OM NA TATRA SURYO BHATI NA CANDRA TARAKAM
NEMA VIDYUTO BHANTI KUTOYAM AGNIH
TAMEVA BHANTAM ANUBHATI SARVAM
TASYA BHASA SARVAM IDAM VIBHATI

GANGE CA YAMUNE CAIVA GODAVARI SARASVATI
NARMADE SINDHU KAVERI NAMASTUBHYAM NAMO NAMAH

OM SARVESAM SVASTI BHAVATU
SARVESAM SANTIR BHAVATU
SARVESAM PURNAM BHAVATU
SARVESAM MANGALAM BHAVATU

SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINAH
SARVE SANTU NIRAMAYAH
SARVE BHADRANI PASYANTU
MA KASCIT DUHKHA BHAGBHAVET

ASATO MA SAT GAMAYA
TAMASO MA JYOTIRGAMAYA
MRTYOR MA AMRTAM GAMAYA

OM PURNAMADAH PURNAMIDAM PURNAT PURNAMUDACYATE
PURNASYA PURNAMADAYA PURNAMEVA'VASISYATE

OM SANTIH SANTIH SANTIH

OM SAHANAVAVATU SAHA NAU BHUNAKTTU SAHA VIRYAM
KARAVAVAHAI TEJASVINAVADHITAMASTU MA VIDVISAVAHAI

OM SANTIH SANTIH SANTIH

SADGURUNATH MAHARAJ KI JAY

HARI OM TAT SAT





My loving thanks to all dear friends for their encouragement in preparing this little book, and for generous help towards meeting printing costs.

Also, thank you so much: Amber & Jon, for drawings: Stanley, for photographs; Phillip & Alan, for music manuscript; Shanti, for writing about Lord Venkatesa; Swami Sushila, for Swamiji's biography; Avrielle, for layout; Lorraine, Ken & family, for printing.

April, 1983.

jyoti
ॐ

23 Waratah Street,
Harbord, Australia.